

Food in Rabbinic Judaism

Spring 2011

Hebrew and Semitic Studies 278

Jewish Studies 278

Religious Studies 278

Instructor:

Professor Jordan D. Rosenblum

Office: Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies, 1340 Van Hise Hall

Office Hours: TuTh 9:00-10:00 am and by appointment

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Course Hours:

Tuesday and Thursday 1:00-2:15 pm

Prerequisite(s):

This course assumes no prior knowledge of Hebrew and/or Judaism, but a love of food is highly recommended.

Course Description:

When considering the kosher laws, people often think of the prohibitions of pork, mixing milk and meat, and eating food not prepared under rabbinic supervision. However, only the pork prohibition is explicit in the Hebrew Bible. The other two are found only in rabbinic literature. Rabbinic Judaism greatly expands upon biblical legislation, innovating a wide array of food practices. Focusing on rabbinic texts, students will explore how and why these novel approaches to food come about. In doing so, students will see how food has been shaped by – and, in turn, shapes – rabbinic Judaism. In order to complete this perspective, the course includes an examination of the modern impact of early rabbinic decisions on food practices. Come hungry to learn!

Course Goals:

Through guided reading in the classroom and at home, students will learn how to read historical documents and to assess various theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of food and culture. Students will further develop these analytical skills through several writing assignments, both in class and take home. Finally, students will understand the literature and historical development of rabbinic Judaism.

Classroom Etiquette:

Students are expected to arrive on time and should not engage in private conversations during class. While laptops are allowed in class, students should use their computers for taking notes and not for surfing the web, sending e-mails, etc. There is no reason for a student to be talking or sending texts on his/her cellular phone during class time. This is distracting to both professor and students. *Students whose behavior in class is disruptive can expect a significant reduction in their final grade.*

Requirements and Grading:

- (1) Regular class attendance of lectures and careful preparation of assigned texts are considered essential aspects of this course. Please bring the assigned texts to class each week. For most class days, there is a text or group of texts highlighted for special consideration, which students are expected to have examined in detail prior to the class. On occasion, a short additional primary text may be assigned. In grading papers and tests, I will be particularly concerned that you are learning the material and concepts that are taught in class sessions. Prior learning of Jewish sources is not a substitute for doing the work required by this course.
- (2) Attendance and participation: 10%. Active involvement in class is highly important and includes attendance as well as participation in class discussion.
- (3) Two papers: 20% each; 40% total. Two short papers, no more than **three** typed, double-spaced pages, will be assigned on *January 27* and *March 24* and are due at the beginning of class on **February 22** and **April 14**. No e-mail submissions will be accepted. For each 24-hour period that a paper is late, the student's grade will be reduced by one full letter grade.
- (4) Response Paper: 5%. Students are required to attend one CJS lecture during the semester (information available online at: <http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/lectures/>) and to write a one-page response paper. The structure of the response paper is as follows: one paragraph summarizing the content and thesis of the lecture and one paragraph of your own critical assessment of the lecture. The response paper must be submitted in hard copy within one week of the lecture. *Late papers will not be accepted.*
- (5) In-Class Midterm: 20%. There will be one midterm, given in class on **March 10**. It will address the readings and class discussions up to that point.
- (6) Final Exam: 25%. The final exam, given on **May 11** from 10:05 am – 12:05 pm, will be cumulative and will address issues covered in the readings and class discussions. *Students must take the final exam at the scheduled time.*
- (7) You may sign up for honors credit, which can be a very productive way of exploring your own interests in relation to the topics of the course. If you do so, it is your responsibility to talk with the professor to arrange your honors work in the first two weeks of the semester.
- **Students are expected to bring relevant texts in hard copy to every class****

Honor Code:

Students are expected to follow the University of Wisconsin-Madison Academic Honor Code. If students have any questions about this policy, please speak with the professor. More information on plagiarism can be found at:
http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

Extension Policy:

Extensions on papers and exams will **not** be granted. For each 24-hour period that a paper is late, the student's grade will be reduced by one full letter grade.

Required Books:

- (1) David Kraemer, *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages* [Routledge Press, 2008] (*JE*)
- (2) Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* [Harvard University Press, 2003] (*HA*)
- (3) Maria Balinska, *The Bagel: The Surprising History of a Modest Bread* [Yale University Press, 2008] (*B*)
- (4) Electronic Reserve: Learn@UW (*R*)

****All books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore****

Class Schedule:

January 18	<u>Introduction</u> Reading: <i>JE</i> , "Introduction," 1-8
January 20	<u>Food, Identity, History, Gender, and Culture</u> Reading: Frederick Kaufman, "Debbie Does Salad," 55-60 (<i>R</i>); Mike Miliard, "Choosing Our Religion," available online at: http://thephoenix.com/Boston/Life/34630-Choosing-our-religion/
January 25	<u>Cookbooks as Historical Documents; Psychology and Food</u> Reading: Arjun Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine," 3-24 (<i>R</i>); Carol Nemeroff and Paul Rozin, "'You Are What You Eat,'" 50-69 (<i>R</i>)
January 27	<u>Rabbinic Antecedents I: Biblical Food Laws</u> Reading: <i>JE</i> , "The Biblical Period: Our Animals, Their Animals," 9-24; Leviticus 11 (<i>R</i>); Deuteronomy 14 (<i>R</i>) <i>Paper 1 topics distributed</i>
February 1	<u>Rabbinic Antecedents II: Second Temple Period</u> Reading: <i>JE</i> , "The Second Temple Period: The Food of the Gentiles," 25-37; Philo, <i>The Special Laws</i> , 4:106-108 (<i>R</i>)
February 3	<u>The Rabbinic Period</u> Reading: <i>JE</i> , "The Rabbinic Period: 'Thou Shalt Not Eat a Calf with a Mother's Milk,'" 39-54 (focus on <i>m. Hullin</i> 8:1; <i>b. Hullin</i> 104b-105a, discussed on pp. 41-44)

- February 8 The Rabbinic Period
 Reading: *JE*, “The Rabbinic Period: Problematic Mixings” 55-72 (focus on *m. Avodah Zarah* 2:3-6 [pp. 66-67] and the texts discussed on pp. 56-57 and 61-62)
- February 10 The Rabbinic Period
 Reading: *JE*, “The Rabbinic Period: Blessing Food,” 73-86 (focus on *t. Berakhot* 4:1 [p. 75] and *m. Berakhot* 6:1-5, 7 [pp. 77 and 79])
- February 15 Rabbinic Food in the Medieval Period I
 Reading: *JE*, “Waiting for the Next Meal,” 87-97 (focus on the texts discussed on pp. 91-92 and 94-95)
- February 17 Rabbinic Food in the Medieval Period II
 Reading: *JE*, “Separating the Dishes,” 99-121 (focus on *b. Hullin* 111b [p. 100] and the texts discussed on pp. 101-103, 111, and 116)
- February 22 “Holy Kugel”: Rabbinic Food in Hasidic Thought
 Reading: Allan Nadler, “Holy Kugel: The Sanctification of Ashkenazic Ethnic Foods in Hasidism,” 193-214 (focus on the texts discussed on pp. 193-194 and 204-206)
 **** Paper 1 due in class ****
- February 24 Rabbinic Food in the Modern Period
 Reading: *JE*, “Crossing Boundaries,” 123-145 (focus on the texts discussed on pp. 138-139)
- March 1 Rabbinic Food in the Modern Period: Immigration and Food I
 Reading: *HA*, “A Set Table: Jewish Food and Class in Eastern Europe,” 146-177
- March 3 Rabbinic Food in the Modern Period: Immigration and Food II
 Reading: *HA*, “Food Fights: Immigrant Jews and the Lure of America,” 178-219
- March 8 Kosher Wars
 Reading: *JE*, “‘Bugs in the System’ (The Kosher Wars),” 147-172 (focus on the texts discussed on p. 158); Patricia Marx, “Kosher Takeout: Supervising a Food-production Boom,” 1-6 (*R*)
- March 10 **MIDTERM** (in class)
- March 12-20 **SPRING BREAK**

- March 22 The Bagel: Historical Overview
 Reading: *B*, “Introduction”; “The Family Tree”; “Of Bagels and Kings,” xv-xx, 1-43; Check some of the primary sources cited at: <http://menachemmendel.net/blog/2008/11/13/the-bagel/>
- March 24 The Bagel: Food as History; Food Politics
 Reading: *B*, “Rituals, Rhymes and Revolutions: How the Bagel Lost its Worth but Kept its Value”; “Bagel Polemics in an Independent Poland”; “Boiling Over: The Immigrant Bagel and the Struggle for Workers’ Rights”; “‘Kings of the Line’: The Story of Bagel Bakers’ Union Local No. 338,” 44-147
Paper 2 topics distributed
- March 29 The Bagel and Matzah: (Un)Leavened History
 Reading: *B*, “The ‘Bagelising’ of America,” 148-179; Jonathon Sarna, “How Matzah Became Square,” 1-24 (*R*); *b. Pesahim* 46a (*R*)
- March 31 The Bagel: Food as Metonym
 Reading: *B*, “Postscript,” 180-195; Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, “Food as Selves and Others in Cross-cultural Perspective,” 114-120 (*R*); *Sifre Deuteronomy* 354 (*R*)
- April 5 Food in Jewish Literature
 Reading: Nathan Englander, “The Gilgul of Park Avenue,” 109-137 (*R*); Shalom Aleichem, “A Yom Kippur Scandal,” 56-62 (*R*)
- April 7 Modern Kosher Food Ethics
 Reading: Laurie Zoloth: “‘When You Plow the Field, Your Torah Is with You’: Genetic Modification and GM Food in the Jewish Tradition(s),” 81-110 (*R*)
- April 12 Jews and Chinese Food
 Reading: Tuchman and Levine, “‘Safe Treyf’: New York Jews and Chinese Food,” 1-23 (*R*); Jennifer 8 Lee, “Why Chow Mein Is the Chosen Food of the Chosen People – or, The Kosher Duck Scandal of 1989,” 89-106 (*R*)
- April 14 Passover: Ritual Performance and Table Talk
 Reading: Passover *haggadah* (*R*)
**** Paper 2 due in class ****
- April 19-21 **NO CLASS: Passover**

- April 26 Movie Screening: “Leon The Pig Farmer”
 Reading: Jordan Rosenblum, ““Why do you refuse to eat pork?":
 Jews, Food, and Identity in Roman Palestine,” 1-19 (focus on
Genesis Rabbah 65:1 [pp. 17-18] and the texts discussed on pp.
 13-14) (*R*)
- April 28 Movie Screening and Discussion: “Leon The Pig Farmer”
 Reading: Nathan Abrams, ““I’ll Have Whatever She’s Having’:
 Jews, Food, and Film,” 87-100 (*R*)
- May 3 The Culinary Jew: The Deli as Test Case
 Reading: David Sax, “From Pushcarts to \$15 Sandwiches: A Nosh
 of New York Deli History,” 20-36; Sue Fishkoff, “Pastrami on
 Rye: The Jewish Deli,” 91-108 (*R*)
- May 5 Conclusions
 Reading: Laurence Roth, “Toward a Kashrut Nation in American
 Jewish Cookbooks, 1990-2000,” 65-91 (*R*)
- May 11 **FINAL EXAM**
10:05 am – 12:05 pm